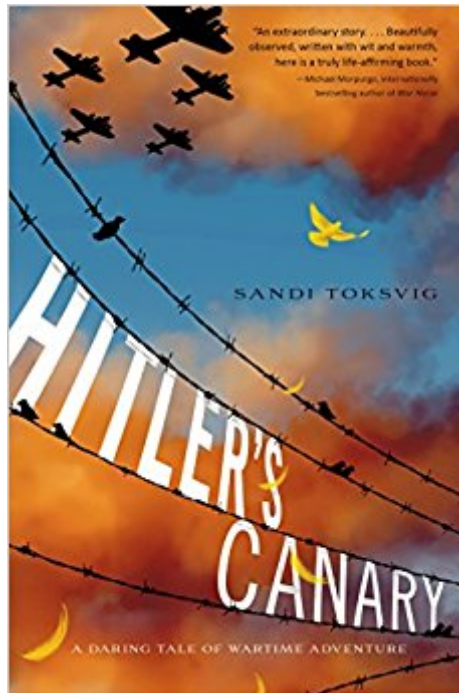




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# Hitler's Canary: A Daring Tale Of Wartime Adventure



## Synopsis

My brother stood up so quickly he almost knocked Mama over. "Why aren't you doing something? Do you know what the British are calling us? Hitler's canary! I've heard it on the radio, on the BBC. They say he has us in a cage and we just sit and sing any tune he wants." I knew I should be afraid, but I didn't know yet what of: the Germans? The British? The French? We were theater people. We didn't get involved in these things. It had nothing to do with us. Bamse is used to drama—his mother is a famous actress and his best friend, Anton, is one of the most daring boys in all of Denmark. Should he follow his father's advice and not stir up trouble—or follow his daring brother into the Resistance and take part in the most demanding role of his life? [Note: The character's name means "Teddy" in Danish and is pronounced "Bum Sir."]

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 5—7 • When Nazi invasion brings a restrictive dictatorship to the fair and free-thinking Danes, Bamse's theatrical family chooses to ignore the increasingly dangerous circumstances in the hope that their genteel family and thespian lifestyle will not be affected. Older brother Orlando sees the writing on the wall and joins the Resistance while Uncle Johann sides with the Nazi sympathizers, hoping for survival through cooperation. Caught in a cage between the British and German fighting, Denmark is dubbed "Hitler's Canary." The increasing number of arrests and likely deportation of all Danish Jews force the Skovlunds to come to terms with reality. Bamse and his Jewish friend Anton begin to work secretly alongside Orlando until Anton's family is forced into hiding. Bamse's political-cartoonist father loses his job and his famous stage-actress mother

makes good use of her acting talent to create an effective diversion for the Gestapo searching their home. Through the voice of 12-year-old Bamse, Toksvig mixes in a sardonic humor that adds spice and comic relief to a story about a very perilous and frightening time. Drawing on real events and the experiences of her family, she re-creates an episode in history when many citizens willingly put their lives at risk to participate in the 10-day rescue of the Danish Jews during the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur holidays of 1943. In total, close to 7200 Jews and 689 non-Jews escaped to Sweden. Readable, intriguing, and realistic, with a good epilogue and author's note appended. --Rita Soltan, Youth Services Consultant, West Bloomfield, MI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this novel based on the experiences of Toksvig's father, the Germans' 1940 invasion of Denmark sweeps a family into heartrending historical drama. Ten-year-old Bamse yearns to take a stand against the occupation like his daring older brother Orlando, despite their father's counsel of quiet cooperation. Gradually, though, the whole family sways to Orlando's position--refusing, along with thousands of other Danes, to be "Hitler's canary" and "just sit in a cage and sing any tune he wants." Mother Marie devises an ingenious subterfuge to shelter neighboring Jews; even blunt Uncle Johann, initially a Nazi sympathizer, does his part to rescue escapees to Sweden--part of the 1943 exodus, elaborated upon in an endnote, in which more than 8,000 were ferried to safety. Though such suspenseful episodes will thrill readers, it is Bamse's growing courage and deepening understanding that drive the story. For additional perspectives on the Danish resistance, suggest Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (1989) and Ellen Levine's nonfiction work *Darkness over Denmark* (2000). Anne O'Malley Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Am a massive fan of Toksvig in Friday Night Comedy News Quiz and this book did not disappoint. Didn't know much about the Danish resistance movement despite being quite familiar with world war 2 history. Unlike *Life Is Beautiful* (no offence) there's no cloyingly uplifting tone, nor is it too bleak. The people are very real (as it is based on real people, after all) and it's one of the best books I've read about this war and holocaust. Comparable to Art Spiegelman's great *Maus*...

I discovered Sandi Toksvig via the BBC Friday Night Comedy podcast, and decided to check out some of her other work. This was listed as a young adult book, but I bought it based on other

reviewers' recommendations, and am glad I did. This is one of my favorite books I've ever read. It is by turns funny, tense, loving, and tender, and sometimes all in the same paragraph. I am reluctant to call a book about a family's private fight with Nazi rule "delightful", but there's just really no other word. Have your thoughts provoked, but do be delighted at the same time. Thoroughly recommended.

Family connections are important in this "coming of age" story set during WWII. A mom lives her entire life as if on stage. Her husband is patient with his wife's "best friend." The family's daughter tries to hide her trysts with a young German soldier. Humor is threaded with anguish, heroism and love.

so interesting...

Great book, good story line and was very interesting. We enjoyed the fictional story along with the actual historical story.

Wonderfully easy read.

The not so well known story of how the Danes managed to save most of Denmark's Jews from deportation to death camps is told through the eyes of a 12 year-old. Bamse the son of a dramatic actress and a timid artist is not Jewish but, his best friend Anton is. Denmark was not only outgunned but also grossly outnumbered by the German invaders. Other than sabotage there was no way they could defend their nation. Bamse's older brother Orlando works for the resistance but, his uncle Johann works for the Nazis. His parents try hard to avoid becoming "involved." Orlando is outraged that his parents along with many of his compatriots are trying to pretend that life in Denmark is normal. Bamse and Anton follow Orlando's lead and join the resistance. The occupation becomes more brutal and it leaks out that the Nazis are planning to round up all the Jews on Rosh ha-Shanah, the Jewish New Year, and deport them to death camps. Ordinary people are then forced to take a stand. What sets Denmark apart from the other European nations of WWII is that, even though there were some traitors, it appears the majority of the Danes stood together. Even several of the Nazi occupiers in Denmark resisted orders to deport the Jews. There were ordinary heroes in other European nations but, not nearly enough. This book is fast-paced, packed with suspense, and can be read in one sitting. Even though it deals with a very serious subject the

violence is minimal, there's no sex, and it's spiked with subtle bits of humor. I also highly recommend the film *A Day in October*. It's very similar to *Hitler's Canary*.

*Hitler's Canary* is based on a true story. It is the story of Miss Toksvig's father during the Second World War and about his, and his family's, work in the Danish resistance. Since her father, Bamse, died some years before her writing this book, she has had to fill in the details with fiction. Bamse (meaning teddy bear in Danish) is the son of the most famous actress in all of Denmark and a well known artist. Because of this he has spent most of his life in the theatre; and that, is all he knows. The book is set out as a play script and he often refers to plays he's seen his mother in. The story is about the Nazi occupation of Denmark. The name comes from the name given to them by the BBC, because of the fact that the Danes just sat there and seemed to chirp when Hitler told them to. But the canary didn't always stay in its cage. Once the persecution of the Jews started, the resistance really began to kick in. The book explains about the history of Denmark and the reasons why the people are so proud. Working together as a country, the Danes managed to evacuate all the Jews within ten days, on fishing trawlers to Sweden. All in all, around seven thousand two hundred and twenty Jews were saved, meaning that fewer than two percent were killed. The two things that this book shows are, first, that you should always stick to what you're good at: Bamses mother's acting, famed throughout Denmark, and his father's art, save three families of Jews from the concentration camps. And second, not all Danes are good and not all Germans are bad: some Germans did indeed help some Jews get away; some warned families; others left the ships to pass through unharmed. One brave man, who was in charge of the Copenhagen harbour, sabotaged German war ships, so they couldn't go after the Jews. Then again, the Danish-Nazi group would often help the Nazis. I would particularly recommend the 'program notes', because they tell you so much about the war itself. It doesn't matter how old you are to read this book. All you need is a general knowledge of the war and, if you don't mind slight out bursts of Danish, this book is perfect. Jessica [...]

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